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Miriam's Story  
(Told to Ruth 2007)

Miriam Farkash Ingber - is going to tell about her life.

Ruth: First tell me your place of birth, where were you born?

Miriam: I was born in Terneva, Czechoslovakia. Anyway I was born maybe it was 500 Jews in a small town. It was not just Jews it was Gentiles too. But Jews were maybe 500. You know we had only one Shul and a nice Rabbi, very nice Rabbi in Terneva and so I was born there in 1929, July 24, 1929.

Ruth: In a hospital or in your house?

Miriam: In a house. We didn't have a hospital. We had a midwife, she came to the home and helped my mother. My mother has 11 children.

Ruth: Which number were you out of the 11?

Miriam: I was 5<sup>th</sup> and you see back home one child raised the other. Each one schlepped around with a baby no matter if you were a little girl or little boy and you just took care of each other. If my mother came home from outside from the street, from the store for instance, she took off her shoes. So if one of the girls had to go out, we had the same size shoes for sharing and we put them on and we went to do what we had to do outside.

Ruth: What were the names of all of your sisters and brothers?

Miriam: My oldest sister was Rivka, but she died at 8 years old. Moshe, Rivka, Simdra, Brana, Shmiel, Rachel, Malya, Malka, Shloma and Lieber. We were little kids when we went to ghetto camp and concentration.

Ruth: What was your father's name?

Miriam: Psachya Farkash. My mother's name was Haia Saks. My mother was 39 years old when she was taken away. The years when it started you know the pogrom on the Jews in 1943, 1942 I think. Anyway it was just before Pesach.

Ruth: Before we get to the War years, I want you to tell me about your childhood before the War. What did your father do?

Miriam: My father was a salesman. He used to go to the market and buy cows and horses and brought them home to Terneva and sell them to the Gentiles. You know he used to buy and sell. He always used to go to Tirresev the market. We couldn't do business in Ternava just a small community, but they used to go to the market to a big city and buy a lot of animals with my brother and bring them back to Terneva and sell them to the Gentiles. That was his living.





Ruth: Now did the older kids go to school? Were there schools, did they go to Hebrew Schools or Czechoslovakians schools?

Miriam: We went to a Rabbi to learn Cheder (school). We learned from the Rabbi.

Ruth: What about the girls, did you get any education?

Miriam: The girls I think they also went to learn from the Rabbi and we also went to Czech. school. Not much schooling only 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades.

Ruth: What about you? Did you go to the public schools, the Czechoslovakians School?

Miriam: You see most of the time I was sick and then the War broke out then Jews were not allowed to go to school. So where I went I had very little education, but my mother was very educated in Hungarian and Czechoslovakian and Yiddish she used to read and write letters for women that their husbands were in the Army. Because she was born somewhere else. She was born in Soltvana, Czech. and so she was educated.

Ruth: And what about your father, was he educated?

Miriam: A little bit, yeah.

Ruth: Was it an Orthodox household, were you very religious?

Miriam: Yes, sure. My mother wore a Shitel (wig). I mean who wasn't taught about those days and everybody was religious and my father went to Shul every Shabbos and he even wore a beard but he went to Shul every Shabbos and prayed everyday. His mother died when he was a baby but his father remarried and was taken away to Galatzia in 1939. There were lots of kids in the family but all taken away together and killed in the War.

Ruth: What were Friday nights like for you? Did everyone sit together and eat a Shabbos meal?

Miriam: Yes, yes my father went to Shul and he came home and they sang shmirot and they made kiddish and we sat down to eat like a normal family. We didn't have much but on Friday nights and Saturday morning we had Challah instead of cornbread. For Shabbos we had Challah and we had a piece of meat for Shabbos too and a cholent somebody had an oven and Friday afternoons we took the cholent there to the people. They put it in the oven and Saturday after 12:00 you went to get bread for cholent from there.

Ruth: So not every house had a stove or an oven?

Miriam: We had a stove but to make a cholent we had to have a special oven you couldn't just make anywhere you had to have a special oven. How bad it was and how poor we were it was very togetherness, hamish, lovable.





Ruth: What were the high holidays like?

Miriam: Well my mother used to prepare food. We didn't have a refrigerator at that time but we had like a cellar. A cellar goes on it was like an icebox. My mother took the food and took it right down to the cellar. You know because it was two days Rosh Hashanah and like it came out this week 3 Shabbos and so she put down the food down there and it stayed fresh. Then, the evening my mother dressed in white and father had a kippa and white kippa.

Ruth: Did all the kids dress in white?

Miriam: The kids didn't go.

Ruth: They didn't go?

Miriam: Yeah. In those days the kids didn't go. We were baby-sitting little kids and so my mother and father went to Shul and you know around 11:00 they came back and they were fasting. The next day, the first day of Rosh Hashanah the same thing my mother dressed up in white. She had her slippers on and you know she had a shitle. I don't remember if she wore a scarf. I know she didn't have a hat. Such a beautiful woman. My father it was like a prince and a princess and he went to Shul and he stayed at Shul until about 2:00. 2:00 he came home and he rested up a little bit and he went back to Shul and he stayed until neila. It was Rosh Hashanah. Then Yom Kippur, the same thing. My mother did all the cooking. She used to bake strudel and to braid the bread. For the holidays there was food, soups, lox, fish you know she prepared very nice challah. We had challah always on the Shabbos we had the challah. Some days we had cornbread. We grew up on cornbread and Yom Kippur. My mother dressed up in white you know and my father had a white kippa. We walked to Shul at that time there was no car and we stayed until 10:00 when it was over. We came home and we went to sleep and then we were fasting you know my mother and father. The next day we got up around 8 or 8:30 got dressed nice and walked to Shul. Stayed at Shul until about I don't know a long time after, we came home. Then we went back and we stayed until the end. I don't know what time they closed the Shul and that was my father and mother on the High Holidays. It was nice.

Ruth: It was nice and peaceful and it was loving.

Miriam: It was peaceful and very loving. Very loving. We didn't have much but we had a lot of love and the family was together and everybody was happy. We got a new dress. My sister and I got the same dresses like twins. I remember the last Rosh Hashanah. The dressmaker made us dresses and my mother bought the material red and polka dots and pleated dresses. I love pleats until today.

Ruth: You had pretty dresses.

Miriam. Yes, pretty dresses and we walked like the whole world belonged to us.

Ruth: That was Rosh Hashanah, what about Passover?







Miriam: When it used to come Passover. It was such a, I can't tell you. People were poor. We were very poor, everybody was poor. So you had to bake your own matzah. My mother used to go there was one place where they baked the matzah. A month before Passover you bought the flour and you kneaded it and everything and you went to this place where they baked the matzah. You get so much because a big family like we were you needed a lot of matzah. So, I don't know, my mother for 4 weeks she went to the matzah place. Poor thing she worked so hard to bake the matzah. Every morning she got up and went to this place it was one hour we had to bake the matzah for Passover. They came in like in a basket and they had to be covered up because homeless children would go in. So first thing was for us to bake the matzah. To buy the flour it was very expensive. Then to go and bake the matzah. I mean everybody had to bake their own matzah, you know, every family. Then we had to get ready for Passover and then buy groceries like eggs, meat and potatoes, lots and lots of potatoes. Some of them we grew in the garden but some, I don't know they went to the farmers. There we go for eggs and my father bought the potatoes and we needed oil. My mother had her own dishes every year Passover dishes. So we had goose, we had a lot of geese so my mother was making fat. So she took some corn like from corn.

Ruth: Cornmeal.

Miriam: No the corn, the kernels and she soaked them in oil and water and she took each goose and she would sit on the floor and put him between her legs, the goose, put one leg on top of him and opened his mouth and packed him, packed him with the corn and he got so fat, you wouldn't believe it. That was our meat for Passover. One time, one goose it went in the wrong way, because if something happened then it is not going to be Kosher. I told you I was the shamus (helper) so the shochet (butcher) you have to kill it I mean shoot the goose otherwise it would die it's not Kosher. So I had to run there was no shochet in our town we had to run. I will never forget it as long as I live, a child I had the goose with me I had to go to through a river like the Potomac but there was a ferry that took you over. My heart was going every minute by falling out in the ocean. That is how much I hated it. You never said no to my mother to my parents. I never said no. So I took the goose to the shochet across the ocean there was another town. There was a shochet and I came home and we had to take off the feathers and it was already dead. She took off the feathers and she put on the fire so the feathers should come off and this should come off and she cleaned it so good. She opened it up and there was a liver, let me tell you as big as this radio a liver from feeding from the corn you know the oil, corn. Then she made gream. You know what gream means? The goose was so fat and so she took and put pieces and tie it on the fire and the fat comes out. So there was so much fat on that goose that my mother took off the fat, cut it in pieces and dried it out and the smaltz (fat), she took the smaltz put it in a jar and took the pieces of all the fat that went out and made sweabamaie for Shabbos. She cut up an onion, she had a potatoes and crushed it up and took the gream put it inside and my father came from Shul he had a good meal. Oh my gosh.

Ruth: Was it good?







Miriam: Delicious. Delicious and that's what my mother did with all of the geese for Passover. You know we were lucky we had enough smaltz it was a big deal the smaltz but here you are afraid to eat the smaltz. You know there we had like 10 or 15 geese and for Pesach we went shochet or the shochet (butcher) would come to the house you know and shochet again. How can you take this across the river 12/15 geese. You think it was easy you had to get up everyday 6:00 in the morning and go with the geese on the field and I had to take a stick and take the goose over there and I was so tired it was early in the morning. So the goose was eating there the grass and things and I would fall asleep. I was tired.

Ruth: Did you loose any of the geese?

Miriam: One time somebody came and took them but we found them. It was not easy. More and more I remember how it goes. So we used to feed those geese you know feed them I don't know, like 6 weeks. My mother used to stuff them you know with the malie (corn) and she put oil in the malie so it goes down easy. And then for Passover he had smaltz which were very important there and we had meat from the geese, he had liver like you wouldn't believe it. Yeah it was a big deal. Some of the meat you know the legs and the thighs she used to hang up and boiled them. She used to go and hang them up and became smoky you know smoked them. So that is what she used to do. So we had all winter long we had some smoked goose. That is how they lived.

Ruth: Have you had any geese since then?

Miriam: Yes. In Israel I had one and I tried it but it didn't taste like my mother's.

Ruth: You ate whatever your parents gave you?

Miriam: You lick your fingers and you were not fat. You were not fat. I was so skinny. My sisters were not fat. Of course how much we ate how could you become fat. You think you should sit down and take as much as you. No way. You know everybody got a little bit. You know so many kids you got to have a lot of food but whatever we were never hungry. My father made sure that the kids are not hungry. Especially on the holidays like High Holidays Passover we had enough matzah. We had on Friday night challah only on Friday night my father came from Shul he washed and mockamozi (made a kiddush) and he gave you a piece, her a piece and, and forget it that's it. That so much.

Ruth: You mentioned before that your mom sang a lot in the house.

Miriam: Yeah, she was a beautiful woman, blonde. She had a beautiful voice. I wished I had a picture.

Ruth: What color eyes did she have?





Miriam: Blue eyes. She was a blonde. Yeah she was beautiful. When my father married her and that's what they used to tell me the story. He brought her home to the family. Everybody stopped doing what they were doing and looked at Chaya. She was the most beautiful woman ever. He was 18 and my mother was 18 when they got married.

Ruth: Was it an arranged marriage?

Miriam: I don't know. I don't think so.

Ruth: Was there a lot of love in the house?

Miriam: Yes. They had 11 children. My father was a very "lover boy" I know that. A lot of love. He used to go to the market and he always brought back something for the children - chocolate, candy something like this. The girls we used to have new dresses for Passover and for the High Holidays, Rosh Hashanah. Twice a year we used to get new dresses from the dressmaker. There was a dressmaker in the back and she used to make us two dresses and I would walk down the street with my dress I thought "I am Princess Diana." It was bad but it was sweet. You didn't know any better.

Ruth: In staying home with your mom, what kind of things did she teach you? Did she teach you to cook or to sew?

Miriam: I was so busy raising the other kids - who taught - she was having a baby every year. If we need meat from the butcher she sent me. If she need to go out while I had to go see the butcher. I was the shamus in the house. So my mother if anything she would take me with her to go to the mikva (ritual bath) to go do this and do that. And if she wants to make hot kugel I did the potatoes. For Passover you had to clean the pans. I went to the river. It was freezing cold because you still had snow you know Passover and things and I cleaned all what my mother used to make the bread in and baking pans and pots and pans and that's how I got sick you know it was cold, freezing cold. I used to do all of that. You know I was a child but I was an old maid.

Ruth: No you were a helper.

Miriam: I was a big helper to my mother. Like for instance, we didn't wash dishes on Saturday you're not allow to wash. So we put away the dishes until Saturday night and Saturday night I was supposed to wash the fleisck (meat) dishes and my sister was supposed to wash the milechik (milk) dishes. While I finished my fleisck dishes and she would just walk out. She said that she didn't want to anymore. She was spoiled rotten. So I had to do her part too. We never fought but I loved her. I loved my sisters.

Miriam: My memories of when I was 7 or 8 years old.

Ruth: Is that when you got sick with the Typhoid?





Miriam: There was sickness going around an epidemic. This was two times all ready. The second time was a terrible Typhoid going around the whole town. Everybody had to put out a thing on the door that you shouldn't go there and you shouldn't associate with the neighbors. But I guess it didn't help. A lot of people got sick and a lot of people died. I got sick and my brother got sick. My brother he got sick for the second time. He got better. But me, I was dying. I didn't get better but I was very sick and became like a little nothing. I lost a lot of weight because we had a lot of diarrhea and I couldn't eat so there was nothing left of me. Amazing, you know, amazing. We were a full house with children but my father loved everyone of us. He really was a good dad. He went away and like from here to New York it was called Sokmere, Hungary and he came a couple of days back it took time . He was a smart man my father. He learned himself how to write and how to read he was very smart. He brought back some kind of bark from the trees and he cooked that and gave it to my mother and she cooked it and my mother gave that to me for a whole week. She said that is what she fed me with and I guess I slowly, slowly I started to open my eyes and talk but it took me at least two years. I could walk I was like a baby and you know they had to teach me to talk and to walk and I made it. So many times they said I was a miracle the way I got better, I got well and so many kids died that time from the Typhoid and I was lucky, I got better. Then my father decided to make his life better. He bought a car.

Ruth: A car:

Miriam: Yes. He learned how to drive. He bought a car. At that time to have a car was you know I don't have to tell you, and he only used it on special occasions. He used to drive people to the baths you know lets say to Czechoslovakia. Lets say Closenborg there was a bath like now it's in Hungary at that time it was in Czech. People still go to the baths. My father was driving my sister and my brother to the baths but he wasn't driving he had another chauffeur with him you know and somehow, I don't know what happened, where we lived our area was nothing but hills, beautiful hills. There was a caravan on the road and two sisters and a brother got killed. There was a court a Bet Din you know and we were so afraid that it was going on for months and months and they put my father in jail and then the lawyers found my father not guilty, but it was going on for years in that situation. For the time being we were starving to death. So when they found my father not guilty well what should be done to make a living? So he decided he is going to another town. There was a mill. He went there and they invited him to work in the mill and he stayed there and he worked there for a whole year. So he would send home money for my mother so we were able to eat it was a very pitiful time.

Ruth: Do you remember how old you were when he was at the mill?

Miriam: I must have been 9 or 10 years old because I remember the car was nothing left but pieces. So the car that we had and I was playing and I pushed at something, the door, and I almost cut my foot off. I still have a mark on my foot from that and that was in 1930 or 1931. I must have been something like 10 or 11 years old. I don't remember.

Ruth: Did he come home from the mill?





Miriam: He came home from the mill after a year. I mean he came for Shabbos every week. My father was the kind of man that he needed something to do. He decided he was going to America. See maybe if he could adjust there in America he is going to ask to bring out the family. So he left for America on the boat and after 3 months he came back and he didn't like it. He wanted to go everywhere but not Israel. He was against Israel. So he came back and he didn't like it, he could not adjust. I remember he brought boxes and boxes you know like those days it was so much smarter than America and he brought everybody clothes, dresses, shoes so much clothes. Boxes and boxes and boxes and we were so happy. We were happy to have him back. It took probably 3 months to get on the ship from New York, from America for a long time. So when he came back, after a while they took him to Moonkataba the Hungarian Army and he left again.

Ruth: Where did he go when he left.

Miriam: Moonkataba, Hungarian Army they took him. He wrote my mother everyday beautiful letters but he couldn't come home after that and we were lucky. That if he would have been home he would be dead. They took away my father's whole family. His brothers, sister. His whole family was wiped out.

Ruth: Who took them?

Miriam: The Hungarians in 1939. You know the Hungarian occupied Czechoslovakia then they came into us it was in 1939/1941. They took all the Czechs put them on buses and killed them. Took them out to Gallitzia and killed them just like the Jews. They were murderers those Hungarians. Did you ever see a Hungarian policeman, they wore hats with feathers to the ceiling. Well they came and they occupied our town. My father wasn't home. When they took away almost half of the town, our neighbor who was my mother's age she ran away. Somehow before they shot her she ran away and came home. She was lucky because they killed everybody. I told you my father's whole family, the children, my grandfather, everybody. But she ran away and she came back. She told my mother, she was like a good friend to my mother, do everything in this world but just don't let police take you, there was no Auschwitz yet, but just don't let them take you away because you're not going to last a day. She put such a fright in my mother. That's all she was thinking. Everything went normal in the town, for a short time but then came the holidays. My father came home for a year or two. I told you he was dealing with horses and cows and everything going to the market bring animals and selling them and he made money. Then in 1941 when again the problems start. The Hungarians started seeing who was married legally, if you had a marriage certificate and if you don't have marriage certificate you were a momser (a bastard). There were a lot of gypsies, they killed them like they kill our chickens. All the gypsies they killed out. I don't know what they had against the gypsies. I don't understand. Hitler too he killed all the gypsies. It was a terrible time so the problems start. We were wearing the yellow bands. My mother she was very frightened she said what are we going to do and here I got sick again, my luck. For Pesach we used to go to the river to wash pots and pans. It wasn't Kosher enough washing them in the house we had to go to wash. I used to work so hard. We had the floor in the kitchen was made out of clay, yellow clay. So before



Pesach we had to smear (rub) the kitchen like a way make a fresh kitchen. I mean fresh floors in every room. Fresh straw in the mattresses for Pesach. We worked to the bone to death. I got sick.

Ruth: Because you were in the river.

Miriam: I caught a cold and developed pneumonia I was 11. I was so sick that the night of the Sedar I couldn't sit at the table. The next day, the police they came and brought a doctor, and the police said everybody should get ready we are going to take away the whole family but we are going to leave me home with my mother because the doctor said she should bury me. Could you imagine, I am still talking to you here. It is true honest to God it is true and that murderer came and they said you know what, take him with the whole family we are not going to leave home to make more business you know to do business because he was doing business. Take him and take everybody and just leave the woman and when I die somebody should bury me because I was not going to live maybe another couple of days. I had a high fever. I was very sick. At the time pneumonia was a serious thing. I mean there was no medicine or nothing and my luck. In a couple of days they took away my father and the whole family were together to the Ghetto. They left my mother home. I was lying in bed. I was sick, I didn't know what was going on, I had a high fever, where I was, what I was. I just saw my mother. She ran to the gypsy in our town and she could tell what is going to happen to the Jews. If you went to her she would tell you what was going to happen. She ran to her and asked what is the future for us, what is going to happen to us. She said to my mother in 1941, 1942, 1943 nobody is going to want to be a Jew except there is not going to be existing Jews. But in 1945 and 1946, everybody wants to be a Jew. Well anyway she was such a smart woman, my mother. I don't know why but you know when you drown and want to save yourself with a straw. She wanted to save herself. She knew she put such a fright into her. They are going to kill us but what is the use for the money? We had the money in the jars for the jam. My mother made jam. She called this guy she used to make business with. He lived all the way on top of the hill. It was like the Grand Canyon it was past the hills, just like that. You had to go for hours to drive with the horse and buggy to get there. Well my mother called him up and she said to him to come in the middle of the night and take her and her daughter to hide us.

Ruth: And she gave him money.

Miriam: She gave him all the money. He came like 12:00 Saturday night. He had some few boys, Jewish boys staying in our house because they were in the Hungarian Army. I remember like today one of the boys, I was a very beautiful little girl, one of the boys came from behind me and gave me kiss and I was so upset because my mother said that if a boy gives you a kiss you become pregnant. Anyway the guy came around 12:00 to the house and there were two horses and they had a big wagon and straw in the wagon and we took out things in pillow cases and went on the wagon and then they covered us with the hay and took us to his house and he put us on top of the barn, you know where they keep the hay we were there all the way on the top. To come and get some hay for the cows and horses you have to come up to the barn so there was a ladder to go up the hayloft. So that was Saturday night. Sunday morning, it was a cold Saturday night, we had still snow. The snow was melting. A lot of water from the snow





melting. It was very cold and raining and wet and everything. We were not so cold because we had coats and my mother took blankets from home and the boy brought some blankets down from his house but nobody knew just him that we were up there. Sunday morning, we were not the only ones who tried to hide and I was very mad because why did we go into hiding. What about the rest of the family? Why should me and my mother go hiding because I started feeling a little better. I started feeling a little bit better and the fever started going down, my mother decided she wants to go into hiding. I was very weak. I was not completely good in the morning I had a terrible high fever but my mother, you know she wanted to live. Who I am to tell her she shouldn't live a 39-year-old woman. She wanted to live so badly. The boy came from the hills and we had only one reason to go into hiding. It was a lot worse than you heard about. Couples with family with children. They were hiding in the woods where they were killed. There was nothing but hills and woods you could hide there and never find you or anything. But what happened, Sunday morning the sun came out because people were so cold and so wet that they decided to come out of the woods and warm up from the sun a little bit. But then on Sunday morning there were two girls who lived there in that house. There were two boys coming, you know to the girls, they were supposed to go to church. The two tall boys came and while they were coming they were singing and whistling. We were looking through the forest from the inside of the barn and we see the boys and all of a sudden they whistle and they take a look and there was those Jewish people out in the sun. They went and they took out of the ground metal poles and took them out and my mother and I were watching them through the slats of the hay loft. They were running and they were dragged around, those poor things, and they dragged them and they were kicked and they were beaten and they were screaming. I tell you I still hear them. In so many years I swear to you I still hear them "help me, help me." When I saw this, I was weak and I was so mad that I said to my mother "mom you want us to hide here before we see our father and all of the children they are going to kill us right here. We have to go down to my father and the children, we have to go." I started crying and begged her "lets go. Don't stay here because they are going to kill us here." So she listened to me. I don't know maybe if she would stayed there she would be alive today who knows, I don't know. But she listened to me and we decided to walk down to town and we were walking and we told them that my mother was bringing me from the hospital. There was a hospital on the other side of the hill. So she is bringing me home from the hospital. Those people not those particular ones but the other ones were best friends of my father's. They were businessmen, they drink together and everything they hide me. I was very weak so my mother decided that we should go and take a rest and sit on the steps and ask him if he could give us a little milk. So he came out and with a stick/shovel if you do not disappear you see I am going to kill you with this. My mother was carrying some stuff on her back and he tells my mother he said "Chaya, why are you carrying that you are not going to be able to use nothing. If I don't kill you, they are going to kill you." So, we slowly, slowly, slowly we went down to town walking down it took us from the morning to the nighttime and we were lucky that we just got into town a train came and we went on the train and we told everybody that we were coming from the hospital because I was very sick. From the little town there was leftover Jews, leftover like me. The train never took us to where my father was in the Ghetto. The train took us to a different Ghetto, took us to Moonkotch Ghetto and my father was in another Ghetto (Mottesalko) with the rest of the family. It was very sad but there was nothing you were able to do.





Ruth: Did you ever see your father again?

Miriam: Not then. Not till the War had ended.

Ruth: Any of your siblings.

Miriam: No, I wish. One brother survived the War. I found him after. One sister lived in Budapest, but she died before we could meet after the War. We were in Moonkotch Ghetto where the Hungarians took over they were murderers you know the one with the feathers. They were such murderers. One went and he took a silver dollar, a Hungarian dollar and threw it down on the floor and picked it up and goes around “who threw this money? Who threw this money?” he came to my mother, “who threw this money?” My mother said “I don’t know” he went and jabbed her and her teeth fell out and blood came from the nose. We were in the Ghetto you know living in tents waiting to take us to Auschwitz. Waiting for the train to take us to Auschwitz.

Ruth: How long were you in the Ghetto. Did they make you work?

Miriam: No. About three weeks - no we didn’t work.

Ruth: It was just a waiting place.

Miriam: It was a starving place and beating up place. We were not under Gestapos or anything but they watched us. Those murderers and they came every minute and we sitting on the sand and we were waiting we didn’t know what was going to happen to us. We didn’t know that there was Auschwitz and where we go and what we do.

Miriam: I want to add another story before we left our town that happened. When they took my father to the Hungarian Army, I didn’t mention that, we were children and my mother was already scared because that woman had come back and she said “do anything in the world just don’t let them take you.” So she went into hiding by herself.

Ruth: Who went into hiding?

Miriam: My mother.

Ruth: Where were the kids?

Miriam: On the street. They thought that they would not bother us because my father was not home. So we were on the street and it was a very bad time at that time. We were not here and not there. We were not taken because we were wandering.

Ruth: Where did you eat and sleep?

Miriam: Home.



Ruth: Did you go back to the house?

Miriam: We went back to the house and they gave us a piece of bread. We made piece bread, piece cereal and beef that we ate. We were just wandering back and forth, back and forth from the house to the street, to the house to the street. At times my mother came out (not like here today a car could run you over) there they are going to kidnap you. See there such things didn't happen at that time. It is just we were wandering the streets. We were alone. My father was away. My brother, Moshe he is in Israel and he was also in the Hungarian Army. Brana was in Budapest I told you. Simdra was also he came home. Simdra came home. He was also in Budapest but then he came home but there was just me, Rachel, Shmiel, Malya the little kids. We were all little kids you know wandering the streets without shoes "marvich Borvich".

Ruth: What does that mean?

Miriam: Naked and without shoes. Borivch means shoeless. Marvich means we were naked. So anyway then a few months later my father came home (they let him come home) and it didn't take long - you know before Pesach this was in the summertime. Wintertime when they we just made Pesach. They started taking away the Jews.

Ruth: Lets fast forward a little bit. You and your mother are in the ghetto. What happened when you were at the ghetto?

Miriam: We were in tents. They put up tents you know we were sitting inside and we were afraid to go out because they would beat you up so terrible. We were sitting in the tent. We took food from home. I don't remember if they gave us food or not but we brought our own food. My mother still had her bedspreads and the tablecloths that sparkled like autumn gold there was a dowry and she had beautiful stuff the most beautiful stuff you ever saw.

Ruth: And she sewed it into the bedspread. Where was it?

Miriam: What.

Ruth: The dowry and the gold.

Miriam: No, No, No. She had two bedspreads, a tablecloth and something else which she gave it to this boy, this Gentile, and said "if I come back I want it back just hide it for me." The rest of the stuff she took it with her on her back to the ghetto. So when we were in the ghetto we schlepped around there for weeks. We were scared to move around. Then the train came, three weeks later the train came, and we were all marching and they put us like cattle and push us in more and more there was no room you know to just sitting and every time the whistle blows on the train, for me it's like - I can't tell you how it's so sad. When the whistle blows . . .

Ruth: It brings all those sad ...





Miriam: Yeah and when we arrived to when we went the train started going slow, slow and then we pass bridges and then when we arrived to Auschwitz it was blowing, blowing so much. The feeling to me you can't shake it the feeling.

Ruth: When the train doors opened what happened?

Miriam: When we arrived at Auschwitz it took a little time until they let us out. The people laid there, sat there on the train. We left a little bit on the train you know with the open but we suffocated there all the people died and cried and dozens until schmitvel (dirty, urine and fecal matter from the people in the train) the rest to Auschwitz and it was a little while it took time until the door opened. The door opened and a man came up (I don't remember in Yiddish or in Hebrew) he said "give the babies to the old people. Young people give all of your children to the elderly people and don't say you are sick. Don't mention that you are sick." So there was one woman from my town she has a little boy. She gave him to her mother, the little boy. So we went down from the train and then starting to - to left to right you know all of the people and the children. They marched like..... and this to the left and this to the right and then the young women they start crying they lost their child they were running after them. Me and my mother also went to the left. They took us to the left. I was a nothing. I don't know today, I wonder myself how in the world I survived and when I got into Auschwitz, I was like a toothpick, so weak. I couldn't stand on my feet. So anyway they put me to the left and my mother. They marched there straight to the crematorium. Not even there the first day they put you into a building where they gassed you. They said it was for showers or bed but you never came out from there. They gassed you up and that's it. Put you in the gas. She wanted to live, she wanted to live, she wanted to live so badly I can't tell you. She did everything. She grabbed me by the hand and said "lets go back, lets run, run." She took a chance with her life a couple of times so we ran back with the people and finally we went to eat you know so they took us to the barracks. I was in A Block with my mother. We had like military bunk beds. Ten ladies slept in a bunk bed. Every morning you have to go out and 5 in a line Schellapel. They called it schellapel. Schellapel (roll call) they called you and stayed 5 in a line but I was so weak and then the Kapo came and counted you every morning it was in Auschwitz. I was lucky. The manager she was very nice. She was from Czechoslovakia. She was very nice. She put me all the way in the back as she put us in a little chair and then the Kapo came. She grabbed a chair and shove me at the end of the line and that how we were in Auschwitz for 6 weeks that what she did for me. Otherwise, I would be gone and that's what she did for me and my mother. A piece of bread they gave you, they gave you a piece of bread for three days. My mother did not eat it. She didn't touch the bread she gave it to me. Everything she did "you have to get your strength back" so she gave it to me. Everything. She took care of me like a child. Did I take care of her? We were in Auschwitz for 6 weeks.

Ruth: Were you picked by Dr. Mengala?

Miriam: Yes. I had beautiful hair at the time, curls you know long hair. You know I was such a beautiful girl. Still was when I got married to Saul. You should see those pictures.

Ruth: You still are.





Miriam: Anyway, Mengala grabbed me.

Ruth: What did he say?

Miriam: Shania hihaira (pretty hair).

Ruth: I am just going to translate. You had beautiful hair.

Miriam: Yes. So he called the girls over. She was working and she said take it and put it there, they call it a sanitarium so I could get well. The “it” was me.

Ruth: Let me ask you when you first got to Auschwitz didn’t they shave peoples’ hair off?

Miriam: That’s what they did. But to me, they took me into that place and there they started burning my hair. They shaved me and they burned my scalp. They put some kind of x-ray machine on me and they told me right there that I would never have hair again. If I have an x-ray on my head, I am going to die. That’s what they told me, the Germans.

Ruth: You had another x-ray on your head?

Miriam: Another x-ray, how do you call it when you have an x-ray, when you get radiation? I have radiation once more then I am not going to live.

Ruth: Did they tell you why they were burning your hair?

Miriam: Because they wanted to experiment on my hair. My hair they chose me that I should have experiment.

Ruth: When you were in there was there anybody that befriended you or talked to you, other Jewish people there?

Miriam: Right. They put you in a room like a doctor’s room and everything and an x-ray machine and they wouldn’t let my mother in you know I thought that’s it. I am going to die.

Ruth: You were completely alone.

Miriam: Alone. After they shaved me and did the x-rays and I was there for 5 hours/6 hours they let me go back to my mother. When I saw my mother back, you know. I was a child when we I said “don’t take my mother. I need my mother, I need my mother.” I still need my mother. So I went back to my mother and I had no hair. Did I show you my head?

Ruth: No you never showed me.



Miriam: The beginning when I survived and I had no hair. I was so miserable, I wanted to commit suicide. What is the beauty in a women? Hair. And if she doesn't have the hair who is going to look at you? Which boy is going to marry you?

Ruth: It's never grown back? What about your eyebrows? Is it real hair on your eyebrows?

Miriam: Yeah sure.

Ruth: They didn't burn near your face.

Miriam: No. Just my scalp and my hair. So in the beginning, I can't tell you.

Ruth: Was it painful, Miriam, when they first did it. Was it red?

Miriam: Red, painful. I was in a lot of pain of course. So they gave me some kind of smear (cream) I should put on and we walked around like this. There was no hats, no scarves no nothing and they gave us gray dresses. They took away our clothes, they shaved our hair.

Ruth: Pubic hair?

Miriam: Yeah but I mean I don't have no hair there but the other women and then they put you into a shower. When you came out from the shower, you don't recognize each other. I didn't recognize my mother.

Ruth: You look completely different without hair.

Miriam: Without hair. They gave you two left shoes or two right shoes. They gave you those gray long dresses all the way to the bottom. You looked - I am thinking now why, why would they do that to us?

Ruth: There is no individuality. Everybody looks the same. You don't have a personality.

Miriam: My mother thought that I am going to die. I'd never come out alive from there. When they took me away from my mother, I thought really they were going to dump me. They shoved us we called them blocaoves they took care of us. They were holaris. They shoved us and they told us "you saw the flames from the crematorium?" They said if you be korvis. You know what korvis is?

Ruth: No.

Miriam: Korvis is a prostitute. If you are a prostitute you are going to survive. If you are not a prostitute you are going to be - see that thing burning? Anyway they put us in the barracks and every three days they brought some kind of - they put something for the girls/women will soon





have their periods. It was like grab the most and a piece of bread for 3 days. They gave you nothing to live and not to die. Not to live and not to die.

Ruth: Were there any connection with the other women in the barracks?

Miriam: Nobody wanted to be close. I was very close to my mother, thank G-d. But some siblings there they were nice to each other. But some siblings - you see there was so much hate and so much pain everybody wanted to take care of themselves. They didn't care sister, mother, brother but a lot of ones cried for their sisters. Cried, terrible if something happened. You see the Hungarians, I was with a lot of Hungarians. They brought from Budapest a lot of the Jews that came from Hungary. The girls were not used to working. They were so fine and the mother took care and they would eat breakfast time, lunchtime, they were like silk but the Germans there was no such a thing. If you can't do the work, you go into the crematorium. We died like flies. Because we could not survive hunger. I was brought up with cornbread. I had so much tzorus (trouble) as a child so I guess that is why I had to survive. You catch one thing you cannot other. So we stayed in Auschwitz and everyday we had to go out and to be counted. And when we had to go to the bathroom there was the Gestapo and they beat you when you went to the bathroom and they beat you when you went here and they beat you when you went there and they kept on beating us. It was terrible.

Ruth: Is that when you got the knot on the neck, was it in Auschwitz.

Miriam: No, that was in Stutthoff.

Ruth: Do you remember that particular beating?

Miriam: Actually no. There was so many. So we were 6 weeks in Auschwitz and Sonia she was the manager she was from Czechoslovakia. She was very nice. She said "people if you acting like you want to live they are going to come and make a transport away from here. Leave. Because here is nothing but a burning camp. You don't have a chance to survive here." Maybe you live for 2 or 3 months but then they put you into the gas. So they came and put us on a train.

Ruth: Okay but before you leave Auschwitz is there anything else you want to tell me about Auschwitz? You were going to say something about your mother.

Miriam: That was not in Auschwitz it was in Stutthoff Camp. Well we were there 6 weeks and we used to go to the crematorium. Used to go the barracks place bring blankets you know they put us to work. We did the entire thing. I was embarrassed, I was sick, I was in a lot of pain in my skull. I walked around "what shall I do" and my mother anything she could find she would smear and put on my head and then she went and she tore a piece of my dress and made a scarf for me. So that's what protected me from the wind and sun when I was bringing blankets to the girls.

Ruth: And all of your belongings when you got off of the train, they took all of them, right?





Miriam: They even took peoples' teeth, everything. When you got off the train, you should have heard the screaming and crying. They took away the babies. How can you forget it? How can you forget it? You try. It was like - it was the most horrible thing - you should see a mountain of shoes, dresses, clothes, robes and everything and people naked. It was just the most horrible thing you ever saw. It was so bad, it was so bad. I saw Mengala he talked to you in the crowd he asked you if you were sick a .... shaniahari.

Ruth: Miriam, I wanted to ask you about the end of the War right before liberation, tell me your mother's story:

Miriam: When we left Stutthof, you know. The Germans took us, we were evacuating. They evacuated us you know maybe 5,000 women. So they just took us and we were just walking, walking, walking day and night. There was no room for us to stay overnight and no place. They just walked us; we walked maybe for a whole week. You know day and night. You were so tired. So finally we came into the woods like a forest. You know what a forest is?

Ruth: A forest.

Miriam: Yes. In the forest there was a barn. The barn was so big like when you walk into the Jewish Community Center the hall, when you walk into the hall, that is how big the whole barn was and that's what they pushed in 5,000 women. There was no room for 5,000 women. So we were so tired and there was no room to sit down so everybody was squeezing together and if you were late you were like this and you got grown up, you know how should I say, like grew together. You couldn't stretch out any more your legs or anything. That's how we were there. I don't know how long like this until people started dying. At the time I was with my mother next to me and there was no food and no one brought you nothing. One day, who knew the time, who knew what day it was. So sometimes we tried to steal a little snow. There was still snow and ice and we would run out and steal a little snow and ice you know and give my mother on the lips. My mother fell apart right away. She, from laying you know, she was all eaten up from the bugs and the weather. She was starving. She was nothing hardly any bones left on her body. You never saw such a thing in your life. Lice, we had so much lice on our lips and ears. The lice was stronger than we are. They used to pull us away from place to place. I am telling you. So we were there and then a lot of people got sick and the only thing they did is they came in and they took two girls (healthy) and they took out the dead ones and threw them out – outside there you should see, threw out the dead and death 5000 women. Death was so high you could not even imagine that is how much death. Everybody was dying. What was there to live? I don't know. Tell me why, why did I survive? Why did I survive, I ask myself thousand/million times until today, why did I survive?

Ruth: So what happened to your mother?

Miriam: So my mother was lying there. Then I got sick. I was next to my mother and I had a fever. I got fever and I started crying mom, mom the lice is eating me up and they are pulling me away from you and my mother and she wanted to live so badly. She wanted to live. She said bring us up some food. Bring us up, bring me, bring me and nobody was there to bring you and



you were lying there next to each other and there was nobody. She was a very smart women, only the mind was talking. I was next to her. She just drifted away. I started screaming. I don't know I was so sick. What happen, maybe I didn't do enough. May I just needed to do some more to make us survive and I don't know I just.....

Ruth: What happened next, after she died?

Miriam: She died and I was lying there. The guard came in and whoever could walk out, walked out. They ran, they had horses and they took them away. Whoever was not able to, they left them there and I was the one that they left me there. I am a little cripple girl there. I was not able to walk out. We had fevers and we were sick and full of lice and full sores and my mother. So I don't know how many days we were still lying there. We were all lying there until all of a sudden we heard noises. Anybody there?

Ruth: In what language?

Miriam: Yiddish or maybe they all speak Hungarian, they speak Yiddish. I don't know what the other languages there was.

Ruth: So who was it that came?

Miriam: The Russian soldiers, you know. They came and looked over and whoever was still alive took us in town, you know, and didn't take us to a hospital or nowhere but just left us outside, sitting outside. They wouldn't even let us into the house because they thought we had a lot of lice and we were sick with fever, so they were afraid to let us in. So they brought outside some clothes to change in and water to bathe and food. Anyway I went back I was so sick but the minute I felt a little better, I went back there.

Ruth: To the barn?

Miriam: Yes. To look for my mother if I could bury her. So I took another girl and she helped me. I was so weak and then she helped me to bury my mother and I bury her and I went back to town and the next day we took a train, we didn't want to stay there. We were in Karloff a small town in Poland. We took the train. To try to get us - to see if some kind of life in life. Who wanted to live, who wanted to live? We were not that happy. I wasn't that happy to be alive. I wished my mother would've been alive.

Ruth: How old were you?

Miriam: I was 15. I wished my mother would be alive. She made sure I am alive. She made sure that I survived. She made sure everything and I could not make sure that she should be alive. It hurts me until I die. I feel, I carry such a guilt myself. Maybe I didn't do enough.

Ruth: What could you have done?





Miriam: I don't know.

Ruth: Nothing

Miriam: Nothing, I know but still it kills me. It doesn't go by a day that I don't think about it.

Ruth: Your thoughts of your mother are about her helping you to live?

Miriam: Not in the barn, G-d forbid but in the camps, in Stutthof and Auschwitz and so she didn't even touch bread. She gave it to me.

Ruth: You should live.

Miriam: I should live. I would think I should live. She loved me dearly and I loved her too. I loved her so much. I wish you know, can you imagine I am forgetting how she looked. I have nightmares that she talks to me but to see her to remember her the way she looked. I don't.

Ruth: Do you remember how she looked before the War?

Miriam: Very good.

Ruth: When she comes to you in dreams, is she pretty vivid?

Miriam: Yes.

Ruth: Is it before the War or after the War or during the War?

Miriam: During the War. I went momma, momma, momma, help me momma.

Ruth: She protected you and loved you and kept you safe as much as anybody could in that horrendous environment.

Miriam: I try to remember her and to think about her and honor her.

Ruth: And you do honor her. Every minute that you live is an honor to her.

Miriam: I hope so. I really hope so.

Ruth: I just want to bring you up a little bit. All the years after experiencing Auschwitz, do you still see those pictures in your mind? Do you still hear those voices?

Miriam: Very much so. It is not that I heard. If something happens to me it right away comes back. Sometimes I wake up, I am ashamed to say, I wake up in the middle of the night and I think somebody is coming to take me away and somebody is hiding under the bed. I swear to you. So I get up from the bed and I am scared to go to the kitchen. Can you believe me? It is



avisha (shameful) you know that it should happen but I am afraid to go to the kitchen to get a drink of water from my bedroom. So I go into the closet and I hide in the closet. And this has happened to me through the years.

Ruth: Now did Saul, your husband come and get you out of the closet?

Miriam: Yes, I cried or I cried so much in my sleep it is terrible.

Ruth: What about the kids? Did your children ever see you in the closet? Did they ever come and get you?

Miriam: I don't know. I don't think so but different bedrooms.

Ruth: So this was private and you kept your pain private that way.

Miriam: Yes. I never told him all that I felt. I tried to tell him. I tried to tell my daughter. She listened to the first part but I tried to tell them how I feel and how it was. The things they know.

Ruth: Let's finish back in Europe. What happened after you left the barn?

Miriam: After that, we went on a train. After we got there to stay there for a while because they're so big and you should have seen. I mean my gosh we were trapped in there like who know how we survived that. They bound us. Excuse me we ate there and we fished there and we lied in there for weeks and weeks and you know we think of things. So we had to wait a little bit and we pulled ourselves together. But it was a very bad place with the Russians and they were mean. They were letting me and they didn't care that if you were sick or if you were a child or you was and they wanted to have sex and they came and they raped you. It's true. They raped so many girls you would not believe it. If she was against it they threw her down from the train. They killed her. They were worst then the Germans. A German didn't try to rape, he just killed you. But they tried to rape you. They said I freed you. I freed you have to come willingly to me.

Ruth: Were you ever raped?

Miriam: No. Oh almost. Almost! I won't tell you the story. Anyway we had to pull ourselves together and we decided a whole bunch of girls we are going home. But the train wasn't going right you know still the War almost finishing so we were in those cattle cars.

Ruth: What happened to you next?

Miriam: Finally, we came. We had a manager take care of us. Everybody was young, young girls and everything. You need somebody to take care of you. You are going home. So what happen? The train was going so we went through Krakow. We had to stop because the train couldn't go. So these Russian soldiers came up, you know. They were drunk. They started kissing on you. You had no idea. Finally we got into Hungary. We finally got into Hungary.





In Hungary we stayed for, I don't know, how many days and they took care the Jewish Community Center. They took care of you and gave you some money and things and they told us to keep on going. So we kept on going. We went to Hungary. From Hungary there were some guys. I met some. They were in the Hungarian labor camp. So where are you going? We were so lonely, you need to grab a momma or a friend somebody you can talk to. You had no idea. Where are you from? You know just questions, questions. He is going to Romania, Bucharest. I said "can I go?" It is just like he put on a dog a leash. So it is just like a leash. We go to Romania, Bucharest. You know what, can I go with you? He said, come one. I am not going to carry you. So we went to the train and we went into it and it was not bad. The ride wasn't so bad. In Bucharest the Jewish Community Center took us in. They gave us some money and some clothes, you know and we were going home. We're going home. We took the train, Ruth, and the train was full of those Russians and I think I was the only one there. Most of them were Russian soldiers. You have no idea. My gosh, they were drunk and all of a sudden, one Russian soldier came over to me, I was sitting and he grabbed me. He started slapping me. He slapped me and the other soldiers, his friends, he grabbed him away and he told me I should run. You know run. So I ran, I don't know where I went and maybe, I don't know how many cars you know I ran. Thank God I sit here. So I went under the car and I was hiding there. There were Romanian soldiers in there. One soldier said to me look he is not going to come out and it took less than an hour. All of a sudden that Russian boy, is he the same drunk? He found me. He found me and he came over and he grabbed me and he slaps me and I start screaming and yelling and this guy who was with him, this other soldier, also tells him, he pulled him away and he tells me to run that way. All night I was running. I swear. So finally I ran back. He steal my money, they steal my clothes. The Russians they steal your eyes out. I had nothing, like before nothing. Finally, I went back where I was in the beginning and he never came there. We finally got to where we were supposed to go and they stopped and we got off the train. We took another train.

Ruth: What happened then?

Miriam: I was in Budapest and in the evening we run around to find somebody you know from the musfoucse. There were dead children. We went to Romania to Budapest to here/there to find

Ruth: Who were you with?

Miriam: With other girls. Because I met some young people and I asked them where are you going. They go to Bucharest and I say can I go with you? I schlepped along. So they took me along.

Ruth: How old were you?

Miriam: I was 16. No I wasn't 16 yet I was 15. Anyway, I came back from Bucharest and it was very bad because of the Russian soldiers. They tried to rape the girls. They threw them down from the train. So I came back to Budapest. In Budapest I thought I would find somebody. Somebody told me that my brother was alive, my father was alive. No they didn't say my father, my brother. So a bunch of girls went to Budapest. They had every major city they opened up a



Joint, a place where you could arrive. Like from Bucharest, they took you in and gave you some money and made you where you should sleep in nice rooms and everything. In Budapest we were in a big, big school. I get very upset. When I was in Budapest, I should have gone, I don't think I would have found my sister, but I would find a place where she should live. See if I placed a picture. I don't know. I get a pain in my chest talking about it. I carry so much pain. Why the hell I am living, why am I alive. Why? I was so stupid. I should have gone and find my sister where she was staying. I should have gone and at least found a picture or something of hers some shoes she had.

Ruth: But instead you continued living.

Miriam: Instead. Living I have continued looking for somebody who is going to take care of me. I was 15 years old. I was scared. So from Budapest, a lot of girls were going to Prague. Came to Prague there was a Joint there too. They took you in and they took care of you, you know the world was very nice to you. Because the minute you say you are a survivor they took you in and took care of you and everything. I was in Prague for I don't how - a few weeks you know and then we say - we were talking that the Russians were going to take over. You know when they moved into Czechoslovakia the Russians. They occupied Czechoslovakia they were Hisa and if we are there we can't leave. You can't leave Romania. You can leave Czechoslovakia. They are not going to let you leave the Country. So we decided, a bunch of people decided we are going to Germany. From there we are going to take some groups to go to Israel. So in the middle of the night we slowly we decided we are going to through the border to German. We went through the border we came to Germany and they put us in a camp and there were barracks. It used to be German military camp. So there we were in this big barracks you know everybody got a room. I got a room. One night, you know the people were so happy, we were free they try to make a party and one guy played hermoshka (accordion) and there was like a school or a dining room a big one so people went there and they say that everybody was to come and there was going to be a dance and I was with another girl we were friends you know schlepped around together. So she said "do you want to go?" I said "what I am going to do. I don't know how to dance." "Come, come, come." So we went. So I said "I am going." So we were standing there in the corner you know like two nibauses you know. Did you see my pictures? I have to show you. We were standing there, all of a sudden the lights went out. The lights went out it got dark and somebody ran around with a flashlight and this is still playing. So this guy was Saul. He comes over and says "would you like to dance?" Here everybody it's "you." In Europe, when Saul met me he was respectful. I said "no I am sorry I don't dance." He said "I teach you. Come on." He was so mad he did not leave me. So he grabbed me and we went dancing. He taught me how to dance and we were dancing until the thing was finished around 11:00. My friends and I we were going home. He asked me if he could take me home. I said okay. Then they were going to a kabbish (party) you know in another barracks. You see the boys at that time the men they were so smart, they think they were smart, a lot of girls were easy girls. "You want to come and have a drink with me?" I said "no I am sorry I don't drink with guys." I wouldn't go. That he liked. He would never leave me anymore. He came everyday and bothered me. He took me to his sister. His sister didn't like me much. No, she is older then him. She said you are supposed to take care us. First she is supposed to get married, not him. Anyway he didn't listen. He said lets get married. Two weeks later we got married. We got a Hupah (wedding





canopy). I have the card. The wedding, I didn't have a wedding dress, white shoes.

Ruth: Who made your dress?

Miriam: What are you talking about? From the Germans, we tore off drapes from the windows and Saul made you know the wedding dress. It is in the picture you can see.

Ruth: It is a beautiful dress.

Miriam: Who made the wedding, he made me a bra. He made my clothes. I had nothing to wear but he made me a dress, he made me a brassiere. Anyway we got married.

Ruth: Where did you live after you got married?

Miriam: The barracks.

Miriam: He was like Beth Shalom-a Conservative Jew and now he today he acts like an Orthodox. But he loved girls.

Ruth: He just became 100% loyal to you.

Miriam: You know who he talks about. I don't know. He was telling me when he got free and you know they came and they took girls you know they put him in those barracks and he said "once I was girls" he loved to talk about sex and those things. So he was telling one side girls slept naked and one side the men slept naked. Nothing happened. The girl survived and she is in Philadelphia. She invited us up to visit. I don't know if that is the girl. Still today that is what he remembers that he slept with a girl who was naked. She slept on one side and he slept on the other side and the girls were naked and she lives in Philadelphia. He talks about that. Why would he remember that?

Ruth: What happened with the girl Saul had known at the beginning of the War?

We go in the barracks it's the evening 10:00 or 11:00 somebody knocks on the door and you say who is that? Who knows I don't remember. We let her in and she says "I am so and so and my sister is alive." While he was in the Hungarian Army he was in peoples' houses you know they were still not Auschwitz but they still didn't take him away. He was stationed in peoples' house. He fell in love with a girl there and there were two sisters. One girl fell in love with him and they promised each other that if she survives and he survives they would marry. She knitted some socks for him before he left. The mother she thinks for him she loves him very much. He was there I don't know 6 weeks in their house and the time came they took him away to the ghettos. They promised each other if she survives and he survives they are going to look for each other. What happened after the war, Saul flew home. He flew, you know Germany is big that is how much space he went. Every space in Germany. Wherever was a DP camp he went to look for her. Every DP camp and he couldn't find her. So then he met me but during the night to our wedding, her sister came to tell Saul that her sister is alive and when I heard that and he



said what are you going to do I mean we don't love each other. I mean it was two strangers and I am nothing yet. You want to go and find her? Go into the heights. He tells me, he said he promised himself and promised his mother, if he gets married no matter how terrible it goes it's gonna be for keeps, forever. He doesn't care - find her or not find her. It took me forever, I mean he was a stranger to me. We met and we got married.

Ruth: Were you scared?

Miriam: I was scared and young. I couldn't sleep with him. I couldn't take off my underpants. I swear to you. It took me at least two or three weeks until I . . . and he was good I mean he waited.

Ruth: He was 10 years older. So he was 25 already and you were 15. That is a big age difference.

Miriam: Right, right, but age doesn't mean a damn thing. Nothing. He loved me so much he gave me so much love that I looked away other things. I became to love him. Because he loved me so much. He would bring me the stars if he could and it is true. I became pregnant right away with Abe.

Ruth: You gave birth to Haia in Israel and Abe was born in the DP camp. Did Saul stay with you in the DP camp?

Miriam: I didn't know where he was. One time he went to a different place. Oh I forgot to tell you I found my brother. Somebody told me where he is. He was also in a DP camp and I was supposed to go with him but then I got sick. So he got sick too. He got very sick and he was in a hospital but in a different space. So I told Saul go see my brother and see what is going on I hear he was a very, very sick. His appendix burst and that's dangerous. He left me and he went. I remember I was in this barracks and all of a sudden a storm came a big storm. Thundering and windy and such a noise and I was so scared. I will never forget as long as I live. I thought somebody was under the bed. "What shall I do, my God, what shall I do?" If I wouldn't be so scared, I was scared to get up from bed - to open the door and get out but I was scared. Of course the barracks were so thin you could hear somebody next door, so I knocked on the wall and I said Yikua please come and save me. Come save me I am dying from fright. He said "okay come to the door" but I was scared to get up from the bed and go to the door. It took me a while, it was dark the lights went out, so finally I went. I got up from bed and ran to the door and opened the door and he came, the neighbor, and took me to his room and spent there the rest of the night.

Ruth: So was he married?

Miriam: Of course. They were older people.

Ruth: You spent the night with him and his wife?





Miriam: Yes. I think he was already like 50 years old. A lot of people survived - middle-aged and some even survived then the wife survived . Well I don't think it was such a miracle. I knew this couple. They both survived. The man survived and the wife survived and they had a terrible marriage. They used to get upset and tell her "I wished you would die there I could marry a young girl." They all married young girls. To me he came on then was an old man 50 years old. He said he wanted to marry me. There was a girl she was 14. I don't know how she survived she was a child. She married this man he was 45/50. She was pregnant. I said "how do you feel." She said "well when a cow when it goes and gives birth that is how she - she brought up the cow and didn't say I am going to have a baby. No she is going to have a cow." She was so naive such a child. She didn't know how to express. She came from a small city. I came from a small city too but I guess I don't know why. I never had an education which I am always going to regret that.

Ruth: Let me ask you. Did Saul ever find the woman. Did she ever come and meet him?

Miriam: The sister. Yeah but he didn't want to go look for her.

Ruth: But did he ever see her again?

Miriam: No, I don't think so. I don't know.

Ruth: So he told the sister he was married.

Miriam: That he was married and doesn't want to find her.

Ruth: Did he ever talk about her again?

Miriam: No.

Ruth: You became a married couple.

Ruth: I am going to bring you ahead. You mentioned Israel. What was it like to celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Passover in Israel? Do you remember that?

Miriam: We were everywhere. They gave us a can of meat with beans for Passover. One can for 3 people. That is what I am telling you. If I tell you – you think she tells a story. But believe me it is no story. When I came to Israel I was in the tents for immigrants.

Ruth: What year did you come to Israel?

Miriam. 1957. Anyway there it was hell on earth in the tents there. Saul wasn't here yet and I had Abe with me.

Ruth: You all stayed in Europe when you first came to Israel?



Miriam: We stayed in Germany. They wouldn't let them out. They would only let mothers with children they let go. I wished they won't. They did me a favor. We almost died the plane, it caught on fire. I tell you they only said mothers and children are going to Israel on a plane. Okay, I took Abe and what kind of plane? A cargo, what they take cargo we sit on the floors. So we were sitting down and you couldn't take much. Anyway you didn't have much and all of a sudden we were over the ocean, Atlantic. I see the sky go around and you know topping the plane goes around and was very upset. The plane was on fire. It was terrible. So we were able to turn around and land in Italy. They took us out were not allow to take anything from the plane. Just took us out like animals. They took us in the waiting place and there we were sitting for 2½ days. They had to fix the plane. They couldn't get another plane. They had to fix that plane. We were sitting there for 2½ days or 3 days and the kids were crying and they were hungry and we were hungry. They gave you nothing. That's the way it was. I don't know why Israel ... otherwise we wouldn't have a Country. They brought people and he gave them nothing. They brought our people and people died. Human beings didn't mean anything, didn't mean anything. I was sick, I almost died and they weren't finished with the plane so we were sitting there for 3 days after that. The kids were hungry, the kids were crying, little milk. Nothing. Finally they came and told us we are leaving. The plane is fixed and we are leaving. They put us back on the plane and we flew to Israel. I thought it is going to help us or something for me. I wanted to go to my Country. I was so excited but I didn't expect that. I am a survivor and I am going into another camp. You don't know how I felt. I felt just to kill myself. If I didn't have Abe, I would have killed myself. That is all I had in my mind. What the hell I have to live for. I said "what do I have to live for" and I thought with a child are we going to be free from Germany, from the camps, from the Nazis. We are going to be treated like . . . yes we are going to have everything – food, enough food that is all I wished. G-d give me enough potatoes, give me enough bread. I was ill and here bread, potatoes, kadachot (nothing) they gave us. Nothing. When I saw this where I am coming I thought people have died they developed Typhoid, Dysentery. Even my sister-in-law's son died poor thing. Yeah her child died. He became sick and he died and so what they didn't care. In a way it was a new Country and you try to bring a lot of asachhofanun (hope) into this Country and we had nothing left to give them. We had nothing left to give them. So they wanted to build up the Country, I don't blame them, but we are survivors. We are survivors. Most of us were survivors. Thank G-d I loved Israel. Thank G-d if not Auschwitz there would never be a Israel. You know how it was? They start bring all the survivors to Israel. I wanted to go to Israel. I didn't want to go to America. No I am going to Israel my Country. What I heard.... Jew, dirty Jew that is all I heard. So we came to we put up tents in Israel. There were a lot of people they brought in everyday and we were sitting there in the heat, in Israel in the heat don't ask. And a child all of a sudden I got sick. I developed you know in my throat, angina. People died from that it was very catchy. I had 105 fever you know. I couldn't talk anymore I swallowed like I don't know what. Here I have a child. What shall I do to help with. Nobody helped you, I went there like in a little room they call it a doctor. A cheder (room in a barrack) they called it. Abe they put in a betala (crib) next to me. I went there and I said "I am dying" and my child and they gave me pills and swallow those and you will feel better. I went back to the tent and I started swallowing those and I got sicker and my fever goes higher and here it is the nighttime. I am dying and my child next to me what I am going do I leave my child with people I don't know because in the tent there were more couples. So I said to the next store where I slept in the tents I was not by myself. I asked





them do me a favor and watch my kid I am going to the doctor. I couldn't wait I went there and I sat on the floor and I was waiting and they were not open and I waited and finally they came and I said "I am dying." So he took a look at my throat and he said you are sick. He took me right away and he put me into the infirmary. I told him I have a son here, a child. What am I going to do? They said that we cannot take him separate because he might be infected and he would infect other people. So they brought him and they put a crib next to me and they started pushing Penicillin. What shall I tell you I'm meant to be in this world to suffer. G-d didn't want me. How many times I was more on the deathbed than on the life bed. How many times and I still survived this and I survived that and I survived things. Finally I got better. Then for 3 months Saul is not here and was supposed to come with shifts. Saul is not here and I have a child and I was weak. I said my husband is supposed to come, where is my husband? He looked at the machine there and he said he is in Tiberias. They put him down at Tiberia. I took Abe in my hand and I go to Tiberia and go to the bus and I took a bus to Tiberia. I come to Tiberia and I go and find Saul. Where is Saul and they tell me he just left to Netanya. It took me two days to find him. I went here, he went there, he went there and I couldn't find him. Finally one day we met in Club Savahan can you imagine and that is how it happened when we go into Israel. Then we stayed in that tent for a long while in Netanya. It was a field. Nothing was built, nothing was there. So they say they are going to give us animals, and they are going to give us cows and we make milk. I don't know if you are familiar. Finally they gave us a house. They took us and I saw where he took us. I couldn't live through. I don't know how I lived through. It was an Arab house made out of clay and there were snakes crawling everywhere and you wouldn't believe it. There was no light. You couldn't see a neighbor like from here to Rockville Pike. You couldn't see a neighbor from here to Rockville Pike. There was no electricity. You didn't even know what was going on. The Arabs came in everyday and killed the Jews. Until finally they gave Saul to work in Tel Aviv where they burned the iron the fire in the oven. Poor thing he worked so hard, he worked so hard and slept on the sidewalks. So he came home for Shabbos, you know they let him off for Shabbos, and he left Sunday early morning. He made \$5.00 a week at that time. So he came home he was so exhausted, tired. He went to sleep and he slept until Sunday morning he had to leave. You believe it. So one day I said to him. I will clear the bed. I cried "Saul what kind of life are we going to have here? I am scared. Go, go get some work here in town. Go see if you can get a job here I don't want to be alone with a child. I am scared. I was scared. Please Saul you work so hard look at the way you look. Let them give you a job. So he went into town so he said all right I will give you a job as a watchman on a horse. He gave him a job and on Friday night the first time he went out on the job.

Ruth: Was it hard for you in Israel?

Miriam: The situation was very bad. I tell you about the Arabs came in every night and they killed young men left them there with small children. I couldn't take it. I just couldn't take it anymore. We lived in the Zanuga (SP) it was an Arab town. There was no electricity. No you couldn't see like 6 or 7 miles a light or a human being lived there. It was horrible. It was just so horrible you wouldn't believe it and I lived there alone with my child. Abe was 9 months old and I was there. Saul was working in Tel Aviv. I hadn't slept a night there and every time, you know, a snake walked around with those things that crawled on the house you know they make noise. They could easily come in the Arabs. The houses were made out of clay. So one night,



he came home and I said Saul we have to leave from here. I cannot take it. So he agreed. We went and we had 5 pounds we gave this Arab 5 pounds and he gave us a key to an apartment in Joppa and also a rabbit. So he gave us a key for 5 pounds. 5 pounds was a lot of money, you know lots of money. The other 5, Saul had 10 pounds, 5 pounds we gave him for the key and the 5 pounds was supposed to buy groceries so he stole it from us the rabbit. Anyway we adjusted there in Joppa and I told you what happened with the rain. It rained for two weeks.

Ruth: Yes.

Miriam: They took my child there in a tent in a school. It was freezing it was cold. Haia was 3 months old. I can't tell you what we went through. The bugs. The child cried for 3 months. She couldn't stop crying. It was so cold I could change the diaper. I couldn't give her a bath, nothing. But the bottom line was, nobody cared. Nobody gave a hoot about the Jew, about the child, the children died from Typhoid and Diphtheria. No medicine, no help, no doctors, no nothing. The Country was just taken I mean we couldn't help it. But they bring more and more people, more and more refugees, more and more all those survivors. All those survivors they brought to Israel. Anyway I was so miserable. I said to myself, if I didn't have the children I would end my life. I couldn't take it. One day I tell Saul, Saul I am going to register I am Czechoslovakian the quarter is very good for the Czech people. Abe was born in Germany was no problem. I want to get a passport. I want to leave. He was fighting with me doesn't want to go. He didn't want to leave Israel etc. You will stay here and I am leaving. You like it or not that's it. I know nothing is waiting for me in America. I knew that I am going to cry. I know that when you come to a Country without the language without anything. Nothing is waiting for me but tourist. But if I work. If I make, if I this I have a dollar to buy ice cream for my child. There I don't have a penny by my name. Ruth we didn't have a penny. If I want money I borrow from one guy a hundred pounds and I paid him back double, two hundred. You just carried a piece of hard life everyday. So I did that. He agreed. Finally he agreed. It took a long time until I get the Visa. You know, you go through all kinds of test before they let you out of the State and into the United States. So I had some x-rays done and they find some kind of spot on my lung, don't ask." So that's the whole thing. They had to check it out, check it in see if I don't have cancer, TB you know. I had pneumonia at home and it showed. Well finally, finally the time came. They gave me the Visa. Then I have to buy a ticket it didn't go so easy not for me, not for us. Not so easy. So we finally we sold the place where we stayed for 400 pounds and I got a ticket and the rest I left for Saul. He should come he get the ticket. I came with the ship.

Ruth: And with Abe.

Miriam: With Abe.

Ruth: Would they not let Haia out?

Miriam: No because she was born in Israel. Oh I tell you when I remember what kind of they did to me. If I had a job in Israel I went to the misrachi (office), do you know what the misrachi is? Everyday I went to the misrachi.. I begged them to give me a job. They gave my





husband a job so I stayed. I loved Israel. I begged how shouldn't be I would stay. I went to the chocolate factory. I begged them to give me a job. It was horrible I must tell you. At that time if you don't go out with the boss – right- they give you nothing protection. You could scream to G-d no job. But the woman she didn't care. She wanted to get a job and she went out with the boss and you know anyway you couldn't get no job. Saul couldn't get a job. You have to feed two kids my gosh how should we live. They gave us for Pesach Ruth. They gave us one box of meat and potatoes. You know a Pesach. That was for the whole 8 days of Pesach. Can you live like this? That is how we lived. Five years I was in Israel. I am going to tell you I was hungry. Many, many times I went to bed without food. I used to buy a little chicken, you know maybe a pound chicken and I made us for Shabbos. I made Shabbos, Tszintick, Montick, Disteck, Mitvoch (Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday) and I took one leg and I made one meal. I took one side of a piece of white and I put a pound of bread inside. I made another meal and that's how we lived. That is how we lived. One time I decided to go to a farm there. I took the bus and thought maybe I would go to the farm I bring some potatoes for Pesach for Passover some eggs you know. So the bus stopped on the way and control came up. My luck and they took away the potatoes and they took away the eggs and he probably had a good time with it and I had nothing again.

Ruth: Did you make any good friends while you were in Israel?

Miriam: Yes, I made a lot of good friends and everybody was crying. The day before I left Israel they all came over and they were crying. Yes I made a lot of friends. I was lucky everybody loved me and I loved them.

Ruth: What did you do for fun? Did you have any fun time in Israel?

Miriam: One time I went to the movies. We went to the movies. I left the baby with somebody, and from my hometown it was his movie theater so because he was from my hometown he gave me a cut. I don't have to pay. What do you think played? Samson and Delilah. When I saw what they did to him, it was the first time I saw a mother killing, I mean, when I saw the chains wrap things I ran out and I told everybody I have a feeling the child cried. I must go I couldn't take. That was one time. But then we had a friend from town he had a fiddle. He played the fiddle and every Saturday night at their house. We went to their house and 3,4 or 5 couples and we were dancing and we had fun. So that is what we did for fun. One day we didn't worry it was Shabbos but Sunday was another day we had to start worry, we had a job, money. Anyway I bought a ticket and I decided it wasn't easy believe me to leave Saul and the child it wasn't but I must if I want my life for my kids not for me, for my children. I wanted them to make their lives easier not what I had. I want them to have better than what I had and that was my feeling, you know you start feeling – my English –

Ruth: You goal, your mission.

Miriam: My goal, my mission. But the kids I must make better because you know what I thought to myself, you know when you are young you are silly, but I wasn't silly but I was so soak by the thing, I was soaked through and through. I said I am never going to bring children



into this world. I am not going to have any children. I am not going to bring a child to suffer the way I suffered. But you know it's not what you want. There was no birth control so there are other things. So I had children. I had two kids and I said I am going to protect them the best I can in my life. I must protect my children. They are not going to suffer like I suffered and that was my goal in life. I said I go to America I know what is waiting for me. I know I am not going to have an easy life there. Which is true, I didn't have an easy life. I couldn't speak the language to get a job. You needed to speak English. At that time the Russian came there is not so many people speak Yiddish to find people to speak Yiddish.

Ruth: How many languages did you speak?

Miriam: I spoke Russian, Czech, Hungarian, Hebrew and Yiddish. German I never cared for you know.

Ruth: You already had 5 languages before you even came to this Country, but not English so you felt it didn't count?

Miriam: Polish. I spoke Polish. You are right. It didn't count. It did not count. I was working in that place you know I cleaned houses and I didn't care.

Ruth: Where did you live when you first came to America?

Miriam: I lived with my father.

Ruth: And his new wife. Was he married then?

Miriam: Yeah. I was a maid for my father. I was a maid for her. I used to carry out her carpets, you know the rugs in the house, and I had to pick them up and take them outside you know clap them to get things out. I worked so hard for her day and night and one time I had to go and find a lawyer to bring Saul in. So I came back and she complained to my father that I didn't do nothing. You know loafed around. I didn't do nothing. My father came to me and told me you didn't clean the house today. What I didn't do. I cleaned the toilets, cleaned the vomiting from the children. If somebody has to go through hell, I went through.

Ruth: Well, let me bring you back. You went to live with your father. You found him after the War. He had come to American and in the process, your mother had not survived the War. He found this other woman that he married. The two of them had children. How many children did they have?

Miriam: Three.

Ruth: Where are they now?

Miriam: Two died. They had that Jewish sickness, Tay-Sachs Disease. Those kids don't survive. They were crippled. They were very smart but you know. The third child survived. She





was a midget, named Dina. After my father died, the new wife married and moved to Israel. She took Dina with her. She and Dina lived in Netanya. Dina died around age 54. She's gone now.

Ruth: When you were there they were alive and very ill?

Miriam: Yeah. But they were happy to have a sister and I had to push them to go outside with them. She had a stroller and I had to – you wouldn't believe it what I had to do. Then when Saul came. Finally Saul came with Haia. She wanted to, Haia should live by her and she is going to hire a teacher and teacher not to go to school to stay in and be busy with the kids. You see company for the children.

Ruth: What about Abe? How did Abe do when you first came to America?

Miriam: Not that good. He was miserable, poor thing. He just left the house and he went one time on a Sunday, he went into the movies and I didn't know where he was and I thought somebody kidnapped him, somebody took him and finally he came home. He went to my father. When he came home it was 12:00 he stayed after every movie. My father beat him up. He took a belt and he beat him up so badly. You wouldn't believe it. The poor things was miserable. She wouldn't give him a little ice cream. She said healthy children can eat bread, bring drink water. They didn't get cocoa cola. Ima couldn't buy a drink for my kids. I can never forget that. I swear a little ice cream she wouldn't give them.

Ruth: Did Abe go to school during the week? How old was he?

Miriam: He didn't start school until Saul came and we found an apartment for \$50.00 a month rent on Kennedy St., 19 Kennedy there was a real estate office and we rented upstairs. The guy felt sorry for us and rented out 2 rooms and Saul found a job at Wilners. Because he was a good tailor they hired him.

Ruth: Where did he work?

Miriam: Wilners Store on 14<sup>th</sup> St.

Ruth: Wilner – W I L N E R

Miriam: Right. He hired him. He was a Jew. But he wouldn't work on Shabbos. You see he came from Israel and at home he wouldn't work on Shabbos. So one day, the boss came over to him and he said Mr. Ingber. When is the Rosh Hodesh (Head of month)? So Saul goes and finds the calendar to find out when. He said no. A day off doesn't happen when you have to pay a bill. You can't work on the Shabbos, I can't keep you and they let him go. He didn't want to work on Shabbos. In the end he had no choice or to starve to death. So we decided that he has to work on Shabbat. There was on Piney Branch Rd. somebody wanted to give up a little store. The rent was kind of high but he thought we would give it a chance both of us. It wasn't that way I tell you. We got a little store. One day this guy comes over and said, Saul I heard you were a very good tailor. He was a New Yorker. Saul you are a very good tailor, how about we



go into partnership. You do the measurements, you do the sewing and I do the writing, you know because Saul could write and so he said yes. We went there and we opened on Wisconsin Ave. a store it had ladies wedding gowns, tuxedos, to the measurements custom made suits you know everything and they started picking up like yeast with the bread. People never could find custom/tailor made suits and they were so happy. They came in operations and made clothes and business. Saul was in the back working and that New Yorker gonif (thief) see he took advantage of Saul. He started coming in the morning. The first day, even Saul couldn't speak any English, but arithmetic he could. He took a look, it's missing \$500.00. He didn't say nothing. The next time he took a look and it is missing \$700.00. He just took. Took from my children. He thought we were dummies, you know. So Saul approached him and said it is missing some money what is going on here. He started screaming, yelling you don't trust me. I pay you off, you pay me off. That is how it started, you know. If somebody steals from you and he knows that Saul knows it. There was no peace there anymore. Saul couldn't stay there because they were not talking to each other. It was bad. So we should take the place. You know how to take measurements, you have to write you have to know how to run a business in custom tailor makes and he didn't know. He was afraid. So he paid us out nothing. Bupkis (nothing). He paid us out. That is why G-d helps everybody who is mean and takes away from your children and robs away from the children. He robs away the bread and the butter from my kids. You know? So G-d help him. After that he died. His wife died. The children died. I wouldn't wish this on anybody, I am not that mean but people did so much harm to us. So like I say I have this little store on Piney Branch Rd I learned how to do tailoring for myself. I said if we are going to exist. I have to know I cannot depend on Saul. So the guy brought in a zipper to put on a pair of pants. So I went and took out the zipper from the pants and I watch them the way they took them out one side and I took a needle and thread and I basted them a new zipper on one side. Then I went and took in the other side and I basted the other side and I saw then there was a new zipper. \$3.50 I made a zipper. The guy brought in sleeves to shorten. So I looked and first I baste everything and I looked and I took it apart nicely like it was before and I baste it up and I made a beautiful pair of sleeves and put the buttons back. A beautiful job and I learned how to shorten coats people brought in. That is how I paid for my kids' education. Abraham got accepted to dental school and then he went to Boston to specializing more. He was in Boston for 4 years. It cost me a fortune. Haia went to college and that's how – we never took vacations or anything else because we just made sure the kids had an education. The kids must have an education. So poor like I lived.

Ruth: Beside the store, when did you work at Hoffburgs?

Miriam: Oh before the store. My father was the chef there.

Ruth: Oh the chef at Hoffburgs?

Miriam: I went over there and Mrs. Hoffburg spoke Yiddish. So I said I need a job. I told her the story, you know the blab, blab, blab everything and she put me in the kitchen. I made salads, I washed dishes whatever I was supposed to do. Her son used to stay I got an adopted daughter. She was so good to me. She opened the door for me. She open the window for me. She used to give me a bottle of wine for Saul to make kiddush on Friday. She was very nice to me. I will





never forget as long as I live how nice. Who else was good to me? She was.

Ruth: How many years did you work for her?

Miriam: I worked maybe 2½. I had to leave the job and they helped me with the ticket. I had to pick up Saul. Not long maybe 2 years.

Ruth: And when you came back from Israel.

Miriam: And when I came back I still worked there but we had to find an apartment. I had to stop and I have child and another child.

Ruth: You got pregnant then right. While you were working for her you got pregnant with Morty.

Miriam: Yes, he came and we got an apartment and I got pregnant. I can't tell you that it is unbelievable. I was pregnant not to have a doctor. I had nothing in this world just came to this Country. What shall I do? Saul wasn't a fact man but you couldn't count on him he couldn't give you advice do this it was all up to me. Everything was all up to me. I said Saul why don't you go check do we have enough money to pay the rent? I had to jump in and I saved up \$1,000.00 so I should have the pay down for my house. \$1,000.00 I pay down. You know down payment in Hyattsville 45<sup>th</sup> Ave. Because we lived in this apartment and this older woman when the kids came home from school and she knocked with her cane. The kids didn't have no peace and one day it was so terrible hard so they open the hose to hose themselves up and she oh G-d and I said I am going mad. I am going to buy a house and I did. I saved up \$1,000.00 you know what that means. A \$1,000.00 and I put a down payment the house was \$15,000.00 and I put a \$1,000.00 down and then I had money to go to settlement and I was the happiest, the happiest, the happiest woman in the world. So then like I say I was pregnant. What shall I do? Mrs. Hoffburg tells me, I told her the story, what shall I do I cannot afford a doctor. I don't have a doctor, I don't have a hospital, I don't have nothing in this world. She said you know what I am going to give you a doctor. You go there he speaks Yiddish and tell him the story and he is going to help you. I went down there his name was Isaacson on Georgia Ave. I went to him. I sat down and I tell him the story. I said look I pay you \$5.00 whenever I can. My husband tries to get a job and I pay I promise but can you help or you give me an abortion or you know help me deliver this baby. He said you know Mrs. Ingber I am sorry there is nothing I can do for you. Nothing he can do for me. I just got up and walked out and fall to the floor like and I cried so, so hard that people heard me. My gosh, why. If it was my mother she would help. She would help the whole world. Why this guy doctor he was a doctor why he say I am sorry I cannot help you and that was going on and on and whenever I go, who I go and at that time I came in 1957, 58, 59, 60 nobody in the world even one would understand if I say can I have an aspirin I have a terrible headache she didn't understand what an aspirin is. What do you want? I said an aspirin. I don't know what that is. How else can I take.

Ruth: People were mean because you had an accent.



Miriam: They were mean. People were mean it is just terrible mean. I don't know why at that time why people were so mean. Today is not so bad. I mean people help each other and visit but at that time. I failed. I went and I decided I am going to learn how to write and speak English at night. So I went like a chicken without a head. What is going to happen? Saul is there. Me, I am at my father's. I don't know what is going to happen next to Abe. He just disappears everyday you know. He doesn't eat. He gets skinny. So I decided to go. I remember it was an American school you know that they give you learning English. So coming back I fell, I trip in the middle of the street and I fell and I don't know how long I was lying there. I didn't break my leg or I did break, but I don't know what happened. But nobody in this world would say, can I help you? What happened to you? Nothing. Finally I got up and I schlepped (walked) you know, slowly, slowly I schlepped back home.

Ruth: When you moved into the house, you had Abe and Haia and you were pregnant with Morty or you already had Morty?

Miriam: No, I was pregnant. I was pregnant. We moved in two rooms. Three rooms we had and for 9 months I was like a tank. You should have seen me. I used to sit down with butter and bread, a whole bread, rye bread with a stick of butter and fill out. I didn't move from the table. It was my sickness and I couldn't help it. I ate to death, I ate.

Ruth: You were pregnant.

Miriam: I was pregnant. So finally somebody told me where there was a clinic. I need to go and do something. So I went to this clinic and I came there and there was an old black woman, prostitutes you know. You are pregnant. I said they didn't even know how many fathers at that time. I swear one was 11 years old. I said to his father come, he said which one. We have a bunch of fathers. Everything was new to me, you know. I couldn't understand 6/7 fathers. So young they had. But I had no choice. So I came and the doctor examined me. He was a doctor like Morty maybe, a young doctor, and he tells me, Mrs. Ingber no pregnancy. You are not pregnant, you have a tumor. I swear to G-d. I have a tumor and I didn't feel the baby and he tried to feel the baby, you know. You have a tumor. A big tumor it needs to come out.

Ruth: So did you have it removed?

Miriam: No. It was a baby.

Ruth: It really was Morty?

Miriam: He was so tiny that he hardly moved. Poor thing. I ate so much I was fat but he had no room to move. It is true he had no room to move around.

Miriam: Dry cleaning store.

Ruth: What kind of work did you do?





Miriam: On Rhode Island Ave. there was a store for sale, not the building just the store, a dry cleaning store. You see at that time it was different. People took advantage of you. We were green and without the language and without the language people took advantage of you. Somebody, he called himself a friend, we took schmatas (rags) you know alter schmatas they filled up the basket with schmatas it wasn't worth 2 cents - he was smarter and when we went to look at the store, the guy said, see how much leaning comes in a day? You know what I mean. My kids were little, how should I know what the guy means or he is gonif (thief) that what he was a gonif. We paid the money. He paid us out so that it cost me \$3,500.00 we bought that business. Let me go back a little bit. There was also a store on Piney Branch Rd., didn't I tell you that? And that guy said for \$3,000.00 he said you can have it. So I thought for \$3,000.00 I build it up you know with customers they're nice, they're this - I am taking it. I went to the bank, Suburban Trust. I borrowed \$3,000.00 and they lend me \$3,000.00 and I got a store on Piney Branch Rd. Now Saul got that store over on Rhode Island Ave. Saul didn't have sense enough to say show me the books. Show me what it brings in and there was some workers there they had collapsed one that was a oh don't ask. He sell it in the middle of the work - it was no good, it was no good. Saul alone couldn't manage a store. He could not. They were stealing whatever came in, was stealing and I didn't want to give up that store. I had a feeling that store I am going to work hard and put the kids through college. You know what I mean. So the rent was so high there, we just wanted somebody to take it over for the rent forget about making money. That guy you know he was supposed to be a friend. He should rest in peace. He is dead. He buried us, he really buried us. So finally somebody took it over just for the rent. We lost all the money there. He had this on Piney Branch Rd. I said Saul you must go and find something to do that this doesn't bring for two people to work and still we build this thing up you have to find another job. Go get a job or something. He was so, he just wanted to be in a business I tell you. Then he went and got in a store in Langley Park. Somebody also gave up the store for a few dollars and then he took it over. He didn't know how to take care of business. Not everybody is a business person. So he took that store and he got so busy there has to be two of us. I am going to sell that store. He cannot be a businessman. He couldn't be never. I said Saul, you know what?, lets get rid of it. Lets try this store build it up and what we do everyday, we advertise or everything. I went and borrowed money and I paid the rent. You know. We were so good in the bank. I paid the \$3,000.00 and then we borrowed \$3,000.00 again. You should see the way I was you know without money. I stayed there. I said Saul you have to go get a job. Why don't you go and work for the Navy as a tailor, do something. You have to bring a salary home. So he listened to me. He went to work for the Navy. Got rid of the store in Langley Park. Got rid of the one on Rhode Island Ave. I had this store in Piney Branch Rd. It was a small store and he used to come, after he came from the Navy, and he helped me you know he used to come in to do coats to do linings that heavy work I couldn't handle it. But shorten sleeves and shorten cuffs you know. It came in a lot of alternations and people loved us, you should of seen but I don't know we were there for 20 years or may be more just unbelievable. I sent Abe to school. I sent Morty to college and you know just from that store. You call it "Mom and Pops" store. So I stayed there until, Saul went to work for the Navy, we stayed there 9 years. I don't know what happened, Ruth, they let him go. He never received a pension or anything they let him go. So he came and worked in the store.



Ruth: During that time is that when you got interested in running and you ran all the marathons? When did you run the marathons?

Miriam: Oh much before. On Sundays.

Ruth: Sundays you ran.

Miriam: Ran. When he came in the store I would change my clothes and run. I ran from Piney Branch Rd. all the way to 4 Corners.

Ruth: And back!?

Miriam: Yes.

Ruth: Wow. How many miles a day did you run?

Miriam: 10 K. How much is 10 K.

Ruth: But everyday you ran?

Miriam: If I didn't run for one day, I lost something. It was my medicine. This running that was my medication. Then I got sick and they told me that I had a blockage in my left leg and it was going to my lung. I am not sure I was with Group Health I almost lost my life and I was on Coumadin for a while.

Ruth: Did you pick up running after that or you just walked after that.

Miriam: Once you run, you can't give it up.

Ruth: So you kept running after that.

Miriam: Yeah. Kept running. Then I had orthoscopic surgery on both of my knees. I had problems with my knees.

Ruth: How many marathons do you think you ran over the years?

Miriam: A lot.

Ruth: More than 10 and Abe ran with you.

Miriam: Abe ran with me. Yes. We ran in Bethesda, we ran one in downtown. We used to run from Potomac or Bethesda. I ran with Haia from her job we ran 10 K.

Ruth: And what about Morty. Did he ever run?





Miriam: Morty lived in Boston. No he was never around us.

Ruth: Haia and Abe both ran with you on Sundays?

Miriam: Haia never ran she walked. She never got into it.

Ruth: What about Saul. Did he ever run.

Miriam: Saul walked. Saul was a walker. You know Walter Reed

Ruth: Walter Reed

Miriam: Yeah. They had march walking. I don't know if you heard about it. You walked all over. You used to drive to Virginia Beach and one time I went with him and we walked 52 kilometers in two days in Virginia Beach by the Navy you know. Saul and I stayed over night in a hotel there and we walked through the booths. He was a walker. He used to love to walk with the – there were a lot of German people. Americans too.

Ruth: Okay I am going to bring you up when you were married 50 years. Did you have some kind of celebration? Did the kids do something?

Miriam: Well, to be honest with you. I had my mind set that Abe was going to send us on a cruise but it didn't happen. Chaya said she wanted to but she could not afford it by herself. Yes when it was our 50<sup>th</sup> my daughter-in-law made us dinner on Friday night and there was and the kids, Abe's kids and Chaya's kids put on a show put on different clothes you know put on a show. It was cute but I was kind of disappointed. You know I never asked for much and I never want to push the party. I never had a birthday party I didn't want it. But the 50<sup>th</sup> year, I thought Abe for sure was going to send us on a cruise.

Ruth: So when did you go on the cruise? Cause you went on a cruise.

Miriam: Yes. I wished I never go. It was a beautiful cruise. A beautiful cruise. A lot of husbands enjoy, not Saul. You know two weeks everything was stung together. He was miserable. He made my life miserable. Most of the time I cried. We went with my next door neighbor and I made sure that she didn't see. He put on that the food is not Kosher enough. They had you know those airplane Kosher meals and you couldn't make him happy. I swear I took clothes for two weeks I didn't even unpack it.

Ruth: The cruise wasn't good, but you did travel with Saul to Hungary a couple of times. What happened the first time you went back after the War. How long had it been since you been to Europe.

Miriam: The first time I went by myself.



Miriam: Yes. To see if I could find where my sister was buried. And then I went with Saul and he helped me find the book from 1940 to 1944 the book who was living and had died. I was lucky and he was good, Saul. He didn't tell me he wanted to surprise me. So he went everyday to the Hungarian and he made us stone you know I am sorry about my sister. He wanted to surprise me.

Ruth: To honor her.

Miriam: Let me tell you something. Fine, I appreciated what he did but

Ruth: How hard was it for you to be in Hungary?

Miriam: Very. You go on vacation, you go with a loving husband it is like you go for honeymoon or you go special places you know that Europe. He was not loving. There was nothing there. I don't why I don't know.

Ruth: So the two of you went back to Europe a couple of times? Did you take any other vacations anywhere else?

Miriam: No.

Ruth: You were really dedicated to the kids.

Miriam: My children were the most – I had nothing else. Just the kids make sure Abe gets the best education money can buy. Morty get the best education can buy and Haia. I need them to have everything but I didn't have and I couldn't afford it myself and I didn't care but I made sure they had education. I don't care. I used to get hand-me-down clothes for Abe. He was so mad it was terrible that the neighbors – they gave me nice clothes I couldn't afford to buy clothes. So Mrs. Harbor gave me (she had three daughters) she bought expensive clothes for her daughters. She gave me for Haia nice dresses, beautiful dresses and Abe used to gets pants. He said mom one day he said I guarantee you I am going to buy me a suit that costs \$500.00.

Ruth: Did he do it?

Miriam: Yes. I make sure he says and he did.

Ruth: Your goals for the kids really succeeded. They are educated. They are happy. They lived fulfilled lives and they have children.

Miriam: I used to buy tickets every High Holiday for Shul – Temple Israel. They came down from Boston and I bought them tickets. I did a lot for my kids which I didn't mind. But you know what you say a parents has to give the child – I could not ever ask Abe to give me this, send me here, send me on a trip. I could never tell him Abe I am disappointed. I couldn't. I could never hurt him so much in telling him I don't know - I couldn't.





Ruth: With the three kids, I want you to describe for me – finish this sentence. My relationship with Abe is?

Miriam: The best.

Ruth: My relationship with Haia is?

Miriam: Better.

Ruth: My relationship with Morty is?

Miriam: Good. Very good. Let me tell you. When Abe grew up me and him were not like mother and son. We were like friends.

Ruth: Well, you were 16 when you had him.

Miriam: He used to tell me – sit up and talk used to come to the store and he tell me everything and I used to tell him that he should never get involved with Shiksas (non-Jews) and he says it's only a movie. I said that is how it starts, Abe only a movie and then it is too late you can't do nothing about it. He used to go in, we were very close. But then you know he married and now we still were close but she was kind of – I stayed away. I didn't want to cause any problems.

Ruth: Okay now what about Haia?

Miriam: With Haia. We became later very close. I am more close now with Chaya then with anybody. Even Morty I am close but not like with Chaya.

Ruth: Now growing up Haia what was she like as a child?

Miriam: She was okay but she was closer to her father then to me. It's maybe because I left her in Israel with her father and I took Abe – I don't know – but she was also closer to her father then to me.

Ruth: And Abe you felt was closer to you then to his father? Now we get to number 3, Morty.

Miriam: Morty was close to me not to his father. He had never had bonding you know bonding. Saul always criticized. He always criticized. Instead of have a nice day, how you doing Morty, how is school? Did you take a book. Did you – Did you and you know a child is a child. He was wrong with the kids and we used to fight terrible just because he was you know. I never lifted a hand to my children. I usually said your father is going to come and you see what he is going to do. I never told him nothing. So I think, not knowing much, not having an education which I should have had gone to school and learned English, to write and read and that is going to bother me until I die. But I am not sorry for what I did for my children. I am not sorry. I want to see my kids happy.





Ruth: And you did a great job.

Miriam: I let them carry plenty. What do you think constantly to grow up in a family where the father and mother were survivor and the father constantly you know. You don't eat that boom the Germans throw this you know what I mean – we lived with that.

Ruth: And yet look how beautiful all three are.

Miriam: Yeah I thank G-d how beautiful they came out. You know they came out perfect. They are lovable and respectable. I respect Abe so much you would not believe it. Haia she is such a mensch (a good person) you know, agotena shuma (good soul). And Morty is loveable, very loveable, a good kid.

Ruth: You couldn't give them material things but you gave them your heart.

Miriam: I gave them heart. When a customer came into the store, I made sure that they greeted them nice. Hi, how are you. You know and to be kind to people, to be nice. The customers loved them.

Ruth: The kids are loved and they also love you.

Miriam: Yes, I love my kids. I would never do anything to hurt them. This February 25, 2008 Saul and I will be married 61 years!

Ruth: What would you say to your kids about how to stay married for so long?

Miriam: Even though we fought like cats and dogs we never went to sleep brogis (angry). We never slept in separate beds, not one night. A lasting marriage takes forgiveness, patience, and love through the good and bad times. We stayed together through it all.

Ruth: I know there are many more stories that you could have told me, but we are going to have to stop now. I want to thank you for telling me about your life. I hope this snapshot booklet will be shared with your family for many years to come. I feel very blessed to know you, and very honored that you shared some of your life story with me.



